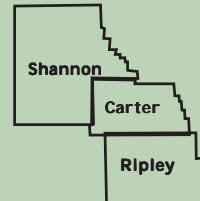




Conservation Currents



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

PROJECTS, ISSUES AND PROGRAMS IN SHANNON, CARTER AND RIPLEY COUNTIES

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ✓ GLASS CONTAINER LAW
- ✓ SPRING BRANCH SLEEPING BEAUTY
- ✓ SUNKLANDS CONSERVATION AREA
- ✓ MO RATTLESNAKES
- ✓ NESTING COVER FOR QUAIL
- ✓ BATTY INSECT CONTROL

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Larry Rieken Wildlife Regional Supervisor

Recently, John Hoskins, Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), asked Noel Poe, Superintendent of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR), if they could work together to complete some habitat work along the Current River. John noted that he had grown up near the ONSR and that he had watched many of the open fields along the river grow up in brush and lose their habitat value for small game.

The timing could not have been better, as the ONSR had a unique funding opportunity to assist with these types of habitat projects. Both agencies were very willing to try to take advantage of the opportunity. For ONSR, the habitat project will keep their fields in an "open" condition and it would help them to control troublesome plant species such as honey locust and sericia lespedeza. For MDC, the project will create better habitat for small game such as quail and rabbits. The population for most small game animals is at an all time low.

Loss of habitat has been the main factor affecting small game populations. So this habitat project will be very beneficial for small game animals and grassland birds and animals.

Several fields have been identified. The largest of the fields, locally known as the Macie Fields, are on the east side of the river and south of Highway 106. These fields cover

over 100 acres. The fields have been treated to control exotic plant species and planted to native warm season grasses.

Warm season grasses are bunch grasses. This means they grow in "clumps" and provide bare ground between the clumps. Warm season grasses are hayed in July when the grasses are actively growing. This avoids disturbing the nests of birds, such as quail, which usually hatch their eggs in early June.



The project went so well that it was expanded in 2005 to include more fields. The latest fields are located near the end on M Highway near Chilton Creek.

Many people have enjoyed observing and hunting quail and other small game in these fields in the past. Aldo Leopold, father of modern conservation and game management, wrote in 1926 in great detail about his successful quail hunts in the fields along the Current River.

If you like what you see in these fields please let us know. And, although the patches on our uniforms may be a little different, both agencies (MDC and ONSR) strongly support good land management practices which include providing quality habitat for our wildlife.

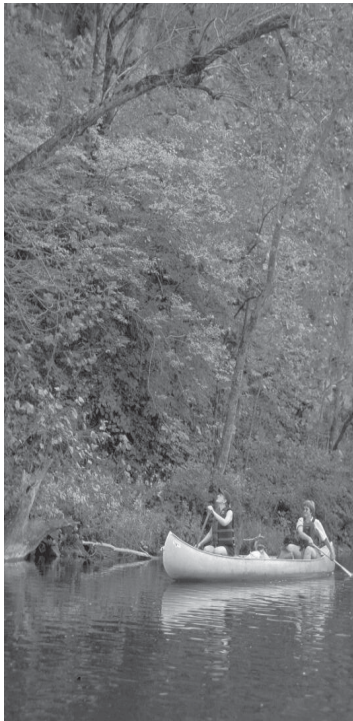
"Loss of habitat has been the main factor affecting small game populations."

Protection

NEW MO GLASS CONTAINER LAW WILL AFFECT CANOERS AND TUBERS



"A new State law will prohibit glass containers on all Missouri waters."



"It does not apply to ...any houseboat, party barge, runabout, ski boat, bass boat..."

Jason Langston Conservation Agent

Summertime is upon us and our attention is once again drawn to the many clear waterways in the Ozarks. Every year thousands of people float our majestic rivers for leisure or for the challenge of sport fishing. There are a couple of notable laws that you should be aware of before you start your summertime fun.

A new State law will prohibit glass containers on all Missouri waters. House Bill 841 passed through the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Holden on June 30 of 2004. This law became part of the Revised Statutes of Missouri as Section 306.325 and went into effect on August 28 2004.

The law pertains specifically to "...any canoe, kayak, or other watercraft which is easily susceptible to swamping, tipping, or rolling..." and also includes "innertubes". It does not apply to "...any houseboat, party barge, runabout, ski boat, bass boat (or) excursion gambling boat...or similar watercraft not easily susceptible to swamping, tipping, or rolling".

Conditions of the law are that any person in or on the water and transporting foodstuffs or beverages shall not use any glass container other than those for substances prescribed by a licensed physician. They will also be required to use a cooler or icebox sealed in such a way which prevents the contents from spilling in the water and "...carry and affix to the vessel a container or bag suitable for containing refuse, waste, and trash materials and which is capable of being securely closed...".

Any violation of the law will be a class C misdemeanor which is punishable by a fine of not more than three hundred dollars and imprisonment for not more than fifteen days.

If you're not a hard core sport fisherman, but still enjoy going out and getting a couple days of fishing in during the summertime June is the perfect time. The Missouri Department of Conservation offers free fishing days in June. Any person may fish without permit; trout permit and prescribed area daily tag during free fishing days. Free fishing days are the Sat-

urday and Sunday following the first Monday in June. This year June 11th and 12th mark the event. Even though you don't have to have a permit, you still have to comply with set possession limits and length limits on the fish you're keeping. To obtain the correct information you can pick-up a Missouri Department of Conservation Wildlife Code book at any participating vendor or contact your local Conservation Agent.

Fishing is on the house in Missouri during special days in June designated by the Missouri Department of Conservation as Free Fishing Days. Anglers can wet their lines in state waters without having to buy fishing permits, daily trout tags or trout permits at most locations. Requirements for special permits still may apply at some county, city or private areas. Normal regulations, such as size and daily limits, still apply, too. Free Fishing Days give those who don't regularly fish a chance to try out the sport at little or no cost. In addition to waiving permit fees on free fishing days, the Conservation Department will hold several events where anglers can enjoy special fishing opportunities or learn how to fish.



"The Missouri Department of Conservation offers free fishing days on June 11th and 12th."

Fisheries

SLEEPING BEAUTY OF THE OZARKS

Dave Mayers
Fisheries Management Biologist



Nestled in the hills of northern Shannon County lies a sleeping beauty. A small spring fed stream winds its way over gravel and through lush green beds of watercress plants on its short journey to Sinking Creek and then to the Current

River. Like its' Disney fairy tale counterpart, this sleeping beauty is a fragile yet exquisite gem. Her name is Barren Fork.

Why a sterile name was bestowed on such a beautiful place is a wonderment. One can only guess it is because, for most of her journey, she is a dry creek bed. Early settlers crossing such a lifeless creek would not think much of it. However the silent bed of gravel is magically transformed into a cold, clear, babbling waterway by Twin Springs near Chrisco Cemetery. This spring discharges about 7.8 million gallons of 58 degree groundwater per day. That may sound like a significant amount of water, but compared to other Ozarks springs, it is a miniature "leak". For instance, Round Spring pumps out 26 million gallons per day and Alley Springs emits 81 million gallons per day. Then there is the grand-daddy of springs on the Current River, Big Springs, spewing forth a whopping 278 million gallons a day. But like the old saying "good things come in small packages", so is true of Barren Fork.

While the name may conjure up visions of a lifeless environment, the waters here are teeming with life. Lush aquatic vegetation and a variety of aquatic insects cling on to rocks in the swift water. A visitor may see small colorful darter fish scurry around the gravel, and occasionally, if one sits long enough and still enough, a majestically colored rainbow

trout will show itself. Considered by many anglers at the prized gem of Barren Fork, these stream-bred wild rainbow trout have been here for generations. Brought to Missouri in the late 1800's, rainbow trout were "seeded" in about every spring branch cold enough to support trout in the state. Rainbow trout have held there own in this 40 foot wide spring branch, but in very limited numbers. Small waters like this can only support a few fish due to restricted amount of good fish habitat. Nevertheless, the unique aquatic features of Barren Fork are the reason the Missouri Department of Conservation purchased land along its banks in 1995 and again in 2004.

The early purchase by MDC of 268 acres included the Twin Springs area and about ½ mile of coldwater frontage on Barren Fork. The recent purchase of roughly 160 acres is downstream near the mouth and includes another ½ mile of Barren Fork and 1/3 mile of Sinking Creek. Both of these purchases were from willing sellers. MDC manages the trout population under its Blue Ribbon Trout Stream regulations which include a daily limit of one fish at least 18 inches long and use of artificial lures and flies only. These regulations apply to the entire Barren Fork but, like other small waters, the landowners between the public holdings control trespass rights on their property. Boundary lines between public and private property are clearly marked on the stream.

MDC is attempting to boost the population of wild rainbow trout in Barren Fork by improving trout habitat. Structures are being installed to help narrow and deepen the shallow and wide reaches, and to create some overhead cover, something that is lacking for adult-size trout.

So if you happen to be driving west on Highway A in northern Shannon County, and cross a dry stream bed, look for the green "Barren Fork" sign. But don't be fooled, for close by is a sleeping beauty.

"Why a sterile name was bestowed on such a beautiful place is a wonderment."



"Small waters like this can only support a few fish due to restricted amount of good fish habitat."

Forestry

SUNKLANDS CONSERVATION AREA... A MULTIPLE USE FOREST

Dennis Hutchison
Resource Forester



Sunklands Conservation Area covers nearly 60 square miles and is located in northern Shannon County. The area is 99% forested with a typical Ozark mix of oak, hickory, and pine. The Sunklands is 38,000 acres of con-

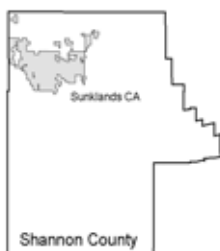
tinuous forest making it the second largest area managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Several different timber companies owned the area until 1992, when it was purchased by the Nature Conservancy and subsequently in 1993 by the Department of Conserva

Continued on page 4

"Historically the area was covered with more shortleaf pine and fewer oaks species than today."



"Our goal for this area is to manage all natural resources in a sustainable, environmentally sound manner."



tion. The Sunklands is known for the many sinkholes or collapsed caverns that dot the landscape, thus giving the area its name.

Historically the area was covered with more shortleaf pine and fewer oaks species than today. During the early 1900s the pine was harvested and used in growing Midwestern cities like St. Louis, Kansas City, Joplin, and Springfield. After removal of the pine, the new forest contained a heavier mix of oaks. Many of these oaks are short lived, commonly 80-90 years. Whereas White Oak, Post Oak, and Pine, which were historically more dominant on the area, live 3-5 hundred years. Today we are seeing areas of oak decline that is caused by the natural mortality of the older mature oak trees. Today managers are working towards creating a more sustainable mix of pine and oak for future generations and forest managers to use and enjoy.

The area has many benefits to offer the citizens of Missouri: timber and wildlife management, recreation, and natural area management just to name a few. All uses and users are equally important.

Our goal for this area is to manage all natural resources in a sustainable, environmentally sound manner. By demonstrating sound forest management, the Sunklands should provide timber for wood products for years. Blocks of forest called compartments are managed as a unit on a twenty year cycle. These compartments are on average 1,000 acres in size. An evaluation process, called an inventory, is used by managers to determine the best possible forest management. Once these recommendations are approved, local loggers remove products for utilization.

The Sunklands Conservation Area is not only used to manage trees but wildlife as well. Annual food plots have been created and are scattered across the area. These food plots are planted in annual grains that provide high quality foods for wildlife during periods of ice and snow. In addition, these plots attract insects and provide seed that quail chicks, deer, turkey, and many songbirds will use throughout the year.

Wildlife watering ponds also dot the area. These ponds provide supplementary water for wildlife like deer and turkey and habitat for

amphibian species. Ponds are usually shallow in depth and fishless. Amphibians such as salamanders, frogs, and toads use these ponds during early spring to lay eggs.

Harvest operations create woodland openings that are brushy and allow new plants to grow. These areas produce berries, seed and young trees. These "brushy areas" are heavily used by wildlife especially deer and turkey. Deer browse and rely on this new growth of plants for food and nutrients. The brushy structure of these areas is also used by ground nesting birds like the turkey and quail for nesting, cover, and bugging areas for chicks and poults. Native woodland forbs respond and grow in the newly created woodland openings. Forb seeds are high in food value and are some of the best natural foods for turkey and quail. Good forest management allows for good wildlife management.

Sunklands Conservation Area is also home to the state's largest Natural Area. The Natural Area was designated based on the unique complex of sinkholes. The major sinkholes that make up this area are Sunklands, Burr Oak, Yuccapin, Haymeadow, and Bog basins. The Natural Area is 5,800 acres in size and represents 12% of the Conservation Area. Several of the sinkholes have rare plants that only grow in and around this area. Management of these sensitive areas protects and enhances the overall area for future generations.

Recreation from bird watching to hunting and everything in between is allowed in the Sunklands. Primitive camping is permitted and is limited to 14 consecutive days in a 30 day period. No drinking water or toilet facilities are provided. ATV's may be used on roads and trails open to vehicular use only. Bicycles are allowed on trails designated for their use and on roads and trails open to vehicles. Horseback riding is permitted on designated equestrian trails or roads open to vehicles. Any activity involving a group of 10 or more people requires a special use permit and can be obtained from the area manager. If anyone has question concerning the Sunklands please call the MDC Eminence office at 573-226-3616.

Wildlife

DANCES WITH RATTLESNAKES



Dan Drees Wildlife Management Biologist

On a jeep trail deep inside the Sunklands Conservation Area, I realized as I was driving over yet another of the many large branches in the trail that this large and straight one looked different. By the time my brain realized it was a snake I was already driving over it.

My friend, Paul, wasn't paying attention and was very surprised when I suddenly slammed on the brakes. Paul looked at me with bewilderment as I jumped out of the truck.

I announced with dismay that I thought I had just run over a timber rattlesnake. Somehow, Paul got to the rear of the truck before I did and was walking backward down the jeep trail while straining to see the snake under the truck. I was horrified to see the rattlesnake coiled up in the middle of the trail just inches behind Paul. I should have said, "It is behind you!" but instead I pointed to the snake and shouted, "You're going to step on it!!!"

Paul simultaneously completed a combination of a ballerina's leap and an Olympic skater's triple axel. When Paul arrived back on earth, after several minutes of levitation, he was on the other side of the rattlesnake at a distance of several feet. I now understand how 100 pound women can lift overturned buses off of their trapped children.

As the timber rattlesnake came into clear focus for the first time I was completely puzzled, it had no head. Finally, I realized that the trauma of almost having its head run over by this strange giant rolling beast had caused the rattlesnake to hide both its head and its tail inside of its muscular coils. Paul and I moved closer to see if the snake was hurt.

The muffled buzz of the rattle assured me that the snake had escaped the truck. As we watched, the snake slowly unwound, crawled a short distance, and wound itself into the classic striking pose replicated by most taxidermy studios. Paul touched it with the stick to see if it was OK. The rattlesnake responded with a rapid shaking of its large rattle. However, it did not strike or seem very concerned that we would harm it.

It seemed that Paul, I, and the rattlesnake were all admiring our collective good fortune. As Paul and I began discussing the events that had led to his world-class ballet and Olympic performance, the rattlesnake nonchalantly crawled away.

Paul is very proud of the native-American portion of his bloodline, especially now that he is known as "Dances With Rattlesnakes".

There are around 2700 species of snakes throughout the world. Missouri has a total of 50 species. Of these, only five species are venomous. Snakes may bite in self defense, but their bite usually only results in shallow scratches. The timber rattlesnake is Missouri's largest venomous snake species. Adults can range in length from 36 to 60 inches. During the spring and autumn, these lovely snakes may be occasionally seen basking on rock ledges, along bluffs, and sometimes across roads. Timber rattlesnakes are rarely observed because they are shy. Despite their large size, timber rattlesnakes are rarely aggressive. If encountered they may remain motionless to avoid detection. When disturbed, they coil into a ball to hide their faces and protect themselves. They also often try to escape. Timber rattlesnakes prefer mature forest and heavily wooded areas on rocky south and southwest-facing hillsides. Although timber rattlesnakes can live more than 20 years, females do not breed until they are five to 11 years old, and then not again for two to six years. Typically, eight young are born in each litter and only two or three survive their first year.

In Missouri, there has been a continuous decline in the number of timber rattlesnakes as a result of habitat destruction, human persecution, and unregulated collection. The timber rattlesnake is designated as endangered or threatened in 17 states and is being considered for special status by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. While timber rattlesnakes do not have a special designation in Missouri, they are protected by the Missouri Wildlife Code. In addition, sightings of this rare snake should be reported so that biologists can continue to monitor the health of our Missouri populations. If you observe a timber rattlesnake, please do not disturb it and please report your sighting to your local MDC Natural History Biologist.

"You're going to step on it!!!"



"Paul simultaneously completed a combination of a ballerina's leap and an Olympic skater's triple axel."



"Despite their large size, timber rattlesnakes are rarely aggressive."

Private Lands

SAFE NESTING COVER FOR QUAIL: SPARSE OR DENSE?

Brad McKee
Private Lands Conservationist



"Bobwhite nests are usually found in sparse vegetation, near the edge of a patch of grass."



You might think the heavier the grass cover for quail to nest, the better they could hide from predators. But that's not the case. Bobwhite nests are usually found in sparse vegetation, near the edge of a patch of grass. Quail's small size gives them limited mobility so they avoid heavy matted vegetation like brome grass or fescue. You're more likely to find quail nests in shorter native grasses with forbs, moderately grazed pastures, idle land, weedy food plots and brushy fence rows and hedgerows. Quail have been known to nest in no-till fields. Quail need only one clump of grass every 30 feet to nest, with sparse vegetation in between. The grass clumps form an overhead canopy to hide the nest, incubating bird, and eggs.

Quail make nests on the ground in slight depressions from leaves and stems of grasses and forbs or of pine needles. Quail nest from April through September; the females may lay eggs in a nest and leave the incubation to the male, and start another nest. This "double clutching" is one reason for the long nesting season for quail.

Establishing Nesting Cover

If you already have a mixture of erect grasses, forbs and scattered shrubs or brambles on idle land, you have the habitat quail look for in nesting. Old fields like this will be used by quail for nesting as long as the planting stays diverse and the ground surface is not covered with a densely matted grass. If the existing plant mixture is good, but too dense, consider lightly disking some of the area or burning it. The disturbance will thin the vegetation and promote new plant growth that attracts insects. This should be done early or late in the year before or after nesting. Another option is to plant a mixture of lightly-seeded legumes and bunch grasses. Within a year or two the field should be suitable for nesting. The new nesting cover should be planted near woody cover if possible, but quail will travel a quarter of a mile to get to good nesting cover.

Wildlife Ways

Did you know....

The familiar bob-white call of the Northern bob-white quail is given by unmated males during breeding season. Females make that call only in unusual circumstances.

Education

BETTING ON BATS: INSECTS LOOSE, PEOPLE WIN



"In one summer a colony of 150 bats will munch on over 38,000 cucumber beetles; 16,000 June bugs; 19,000 steak bugs; and 50,000 leaf hoppers."

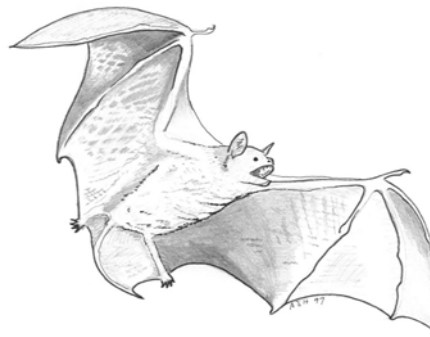
A.J. Hendershott
Outreach & Education
Regional Supervisor

In the game of Black Jack an ace and a King make a strong hand. Who would worry about a hand like that?

Only one who was unfamiliar with black-jack. In the game of insect control bats and people can make a strong hand as well, but you have to understand the game to win.

Here is an example of how it can work.

Oregon farmer Tony Koch once had a problem with corn ear worms. He had an average



of 12-15 worms per ear of corn. Then he installed a whopping 24 bat houses on his farm. These houses provided artificial roost sites for many bat species. As thanks for the free housing 2,000 little brown bats are eating hundreds of thousands of insects including the moth re-

sponsible for corn ear caterpillars (worms). Today he has to work to find corn ear worms. If asked, Koch would likely beam about the hand dealt him.

Mr. Koch now has no need for pesticides and has a higher yield thanks to the bats. Sound like a fluke? Ecologist Dr. John Witaker was able to put some numbers together on bat appetites. He was able to research 150 big brown bats. In one sum

mer a colony like this will munch on over 38,000 cucumber beetles; 16,000 June bugs; 19,000 steak bugs; and 50,000 leaf hoppers. Amazingly, this estimate is low. Many bugs found in a bats stomach cannot be identified due to the state of digestion.

The pay off to people comes from lack of damage that would have happened if cucumber beetles were left to do their work. Adult Cucumber beetles attack corn, spinach, and various vining plants. To make matters worse, the larvae, known as corn rootworms, are devastating to corn crops.

Again, the bats improve crop success and reduce the need for pesticides. Farmers have little to lose when betting on bats except the time and materials invested in a good bat house. A days labor and roughly \$100.00 will provide two nursery colony bat houses. Made properly, a bat house can attract, big brown, little brown, Mexican freetail, and the Pallid bat. (I finished this for you)

The bats value does not stop at agriculture they also improve our health. One tiny little brown bat can devour hundreds of mosquitoes in an hour. Those mosquitoes are more than an annoyance; they carry diseases such as West Nile Virus and Encephalitis. When a little brown bat eats half its weight in bugs every night you can be certain thousands of mosquitoes made the menu.

From the backyard to the back forty, bats make a huge impact on our pocket books, the quality of our food sup-

ply, and our health. The Chinese view bats as a symbol of good luck. Considering the effect they can have on crops and human disease I would say the Chinese are right.

The way to convince bats to help with your insect patrol is to invest in bat houses and proper placement. For more information on bat house designs and placement visit www.mdc.state.mo.us/nathis/woodwork/ww15 or www.batcon.org. Another option is to learn more about cave conservation and let the bats have an undisturbed cave. If you think building a bat house or protecting a cave is a gamble think of the benefits and you may begin to realize you have a winning hand with bats.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting

	Opens	Closes
Coyote	5/9/05	3/31/06
Squirrel	5/28/05	2/15/06
Groundhog	5/9/05	12/15/05

Fishing

	Opens	Closes
Black Bass (impoundments)	Open All Year	----
Black Bass (streams, Current Jacks Fork and their tributaries)	5/28/05	2/28/06
Trout Management Areas	Open All Year	----
Trout Parks	3/1/05	10/31/05
Bullfrog	6/30/05	10/31/05

Resident Hunting Permit Prices

Hunting and Fishing ---	\$19
Small Game ---	\$10
Fall Firearms Turkey ---	\$13
Youth Deer and Turkey ---	\$17
Archery Hunting ---	\$19
Firearms Any Deer ---	\$17
Firearms First Bonus Deer ---	\$7
Firearms Second Bonus Deer ---	\$7
Trapping ---	\$10

Resident Fishing Permit Prices

Hunting and Fishing ---	\$19
Fishing ---	\$12
Trout ---	\$7



We're on the Web!
WWW.CONSERVATION.STATE.MO.US



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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 65109
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MDC Mission

- ✓ To protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state,
- ✓ To serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities,
- ✓ To provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about fish, forest, and wildlife resources.

Mission of This Newsletter

The mission of this newsletter is to share current information about conservation projects, issues, and programs and to develop working relationships with the citizens of Shannon, Carter, and Ripley Counties.

Share Your Thoughts

If there are any subjects you would like to see in the *Conservation Currents* please contact Scott Stephens or have any questions pertaining to the Wildlife Code please contact the Conservation Agent assigned to your county. County assignments and phone numbers are listed below.

Operation Game Thief and Operation Forest Arson

Sponsored by the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the Missouri Dept. of Conservation and the U.S. Forest Service Phone: 1-800-392-1111

CONTACT OFFICES AND NAMES

If you have a question about any of the following topics, here are your contact professionals:

Shannon Co. Field Office
 573/226-3616



Forestry

Gary Gognat 573/226-3616
 Terry Thompson 573/226-3616
 Dennis Hutchison 573/226-3616

Private Land Management:

Mike Gaskins 573/226-3616

Conservation Agents:

Brad Hadley 573/292-8540
 Scott Stephens 573/226-3089

Wildlife

Dan Drees 573/226-3616
 Rhonda Rimer 417/256-7161

Fisheries

Dave Mayers 417/256-7161

Conservation Education

Melanie Carden-Jensen
 417/256-7161

Outdoor Skills

Larry Lindeman 417/256-7161

Carter Co. Field Office
 573/323-8515



Forestry

John Tuttle 573/323-8515

Private Land Management:

Brad McKee 417/778-6610

Conservation Agents:

Ryan Houf 573/323-4727
 Mark Wilcoxon 573/323-8523

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 Rhonda Rimer 417/256-7161

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Ripley Co. Field Office
 573/996-2557



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Steve Paes 573/996-2557

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Conservation Agents:

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 Jason Langston 573/996-2346

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